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SUBJECT: UN/AU CONFRONT CHALLENGES TO PARTICIPATION IN
LIBYA TALKS

REF: KHARTOUM 01646

KHARTOUM 00001648 001.2 OF 002

Summary

¶1. (SBU) The UN/AU are confronting myriad challenges in securing inclusive participation in the upcoming Darfur peace negotiations, the UN/AU told the Khartoum diplomatic corps on October 21. The majority of rebel factions have since announced that they will either abstain from the talks or attend at a later date. Only Ahmed Diraige, who enjoys limited popular support and influence over armed elements in Darfur, and two JEM factions have confirmed their attendance.

While SLM faction leader Abdulwahid Al Nur maintains that he will not participate in the UN/AU process, many other rebel movements are demanding more time for discussions to mend internal rifts prior to the start of talks. In addition, both the sole signatory to the DPA--the SLM led by Minni Minawi--and the SPLM are refusing to attend the negotiations as members of the Government of National Unity's (GNU) delegation. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Briefing the diplomatic community in Khartoum on October 22, the UN and AU team managing the Darfur peace process outlined the challenges of ensuring constructive participation at the upcoming Libya negotiations. "Whatever happens, we will open the talks on October 27," said Sam Ibok, co-chair of the joint UN/AU team. Added Moin Shrim, the senior UN political advisor to the team: "We did the best to get everyone to Serte, but we must warn that the challenges are great."

Rebel Participation

¶3. (SBU) On October 21, the UN/AU issued invitations to the following DPA non-signatory factions, according to Ibok: the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) of Khalil Ibrahim, the JEM of Bahar Abu Gharda and Abdullah Banda, the JEM of Idriss Azraq, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Unity of Abdulwahid al Nur, the SLA of Abdullah Yehia, the SLA of Ahmed Abdulshafie, the SLA of Khamis Abdullah, the National Movement for Reform and Development (NMRD) of Ahmed Diraige, and the United Revolutionary Front Force (URFF) of Abu Surra. The UN/AU

issued the invitations to those leaders who could directly affect the security environment and bring stability by negotiating a cessation of hostilities, the first item on the agenda for the talks. The number of invitations issued to each faction varied based on the movements' internal leadership dynamics. (Note: UN/AU officials in Khartoum and Juba admit that the varying number of invitations generated significant ill will among the movements toward the UN/AU. End note.)

¶4. (SBU) "Abdulwahid has a clear position not to come," said Ibok, adding that some reports indicated that Abdulwahid was discouraging Fur tribal and IDP representatives from participating as well. With the exception of Diraige, Ibok did not confirm the attendance of other rebel movements. While the UN/AU is attempting to include field commanders in the negotiations, Ibok explained that they will not be recognized as equal in status to the political leaders.

¶5. (SBU) While Ibrahim, Diraige, and Abdulwahid's factions were present, over 80 representatives of the other rebel groups had been meeting in Juba under the auspices of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) for several days, said Ibok. Despite UN/AU plans to transport them to Libya on October 23, the rebels requested additional time to prepare for negotiations before departing for the talks. While the discussions had been positive, it was doubtful that more time would result in a unified platform, argued Ibok. However, his personal view was that the UN/AU could organize further internal discussions in Libya among the factions. "The movement's are too fragmented to have reasonable discussions," acknowledged Ibok.

¶6. (SBU) (Note: According to ConGen Juba, SPLM interaction with the Darfur movements has been at the working-level only, with no policy-level engagement planned from the SPLM leadership. Based on conversations with UN/AU officials in Juba, Acting CG reported on October 23 that Ahmed Abdul

KHARTOUM 00001648 002.2 OF 002

Shafie announced that he will not attend the talks and that while Yehia will participate, he plans to drive to Libya over the course of several days. Ibrahim confirmed his attendance. Ibok told Poloff in Khartoum on October 23 that Abu Gharda and Banda also intend to participate in Libya. The UN/AU airlift from Juba to Serte is scheduled for 1400 hours local time on October 23. End note.)

SLM/Minawi Participation

¶7. (SBU) According to Ibok, the SLM faction led by Senior Assistant to the President Minni Minawi--the sole signatory to the DPA--is "strongly opposed" to attending the Libya talks as a member of the Government of National Unity's (GNU) delegation, fearing that it would lose credibility in Darfur through direct association with the National Congress Party (NCP). The SLM instead proposed that it attend in its capacity as a signatory to the DPA and act as a facilitator to bring the hold-out rebel factions to the agreement (reftel). However, the NCP is "very strong" in asserting that the SLM attend the talks as a member of the GNU delegation, said Ibok, which will be led by Presidential Assistant Nafie Ali Nafie.

SPLM Participation

¶8. (SBU) The UN/AU is "working together" with the SPLM to define the party's role in the negotiations, explained Ibok, but differences have emerged within the SPLM on its strategy. One camp has indicated that it wants to share its experiences but avoid direct participation. Ibok remarked that "just passing ideas to the movements will not help" and

that the UN/AU has recommended that the SPLM participate in the GNU delegation. (Note: ConGen Juba reported on October 23 that, given the current political crisis between the NCP and the SPLM, the SPLM did not intend to participate in the GNU delegation to Libya. End note.)

International Community Participation

¶9. (SBU) While restating the UN/AU formula that all members of the "Tripoli Format" are invited to Libya, Ibok said that the four regional countries (Chad, Eritrea, Libya, and Egypt) and four non-regional countries would play a special role in the talks "as envisioned by the Envoys." He provided no additional details on which non-regional countries would assume this role nor specifics on the role they would play.

¶10. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
POWERS